
From: Nassif, Julianne (DPH)
Sent: Monday, May 21, 2007 5:47 PM
To: DeMaria, Alfred (DPH); Gilchrist, Mary (DPH)
Cc: Cheney, Sally (DPH)
Subject: drug lab update

Mary and Al,

The backlog in the Drug Laboratory continues to grow despite temporary reassignment of 1.5 FTEs to the Drug Lab from other areas and \$32K in overtime in the last quarter. The current turnaround time is 65 days from submission to reporting and 7509 samples remained undone in the month of April. For comparative purposes, the goal has always been to keep the turnaround below 30 days.

Sample submissions continue to steadily increase. As the turnaround time increases, so have calls from District Attorneys requesting preliminary results and/or expedited analysis. Currently, they exceed twenty per day. These disruptions are time consuming requiring a change in process for both the evidence officer and analyst - in a production laboratory any change to the standard protocol further exacerbates the turnaround time problem. While we appreciate the time constraints that the DAs are facing in the courts, we are unable to meet their needs for these expedited sample analysis. We will have to refuse some requests soon. We need to communicate this message to the DAs in an efficient way (resurrect the letter?) and also stress the importance of only submitting appropriate samples - marijuana residues etc take a lot of time for misdemeanor penalties.

I don't see much improvement in the short-term. An analyst (Becky) at the Amherst lab is just beginning a 3 month maternity leave. Kevin McCarthy (retired, works part-time) worked many hours while Annie was on maternity leave and is approaching his limit. He will be on vacation for the next four weeks and will work one day/ week upon his return.

On a positive note, a new chemist Lisa Pelletier was hired on the Lead Retained Revenue account and started on May 14th. However, it will be 6-8 weeks before she is fully trained and able to analyze samples independently.

These are my feeble recommendations for staying afloat:

- Authorize additional overtime expenditures, extend the work days, consider a second shift?
- Inform DAs that we will be unable to perform preliminary testing/expedited sample analysis except in extreme situations & deal with the backlash
- Resurrect letter to police departments informing them that we will there will be a temporary moratorium on sample submission & send to the commissioner for consideration.

I would be interested in hearing any creative solutions to managing the growing problem. Thanks.
Julie

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